

COMMENTARY

DESEGREGATION ALONG THE MASON-DIXON LINE

Some Border Incidents and Their Lessons

JAMES RORTY

THE segregationists were in retreat in Baltimore and Washington when I encountered them: their leader threatened with arrest, their organization in danger of legal dissolution, their rallies "de-emphasized" in the news columns of a hostile press. The Supreme Court had pulled their status out from under them, called black the same as white, denied and condemned

SOMEONE has called the momentous decision of the Supreme Court banning racial segregation in U. S. public schools the second "shot heard around the world." Much of the world has since had its ears cocked—some fearfully, some hopefully—for the crackling sounds of violence, perhaps even civil war, that might follow attempts at enforcement. JAMES RORTY, perhaps the most knowledgeable reporter of social conflicts and violence in present-day America, tells here how the end of educational segregation was received in Baltimore and Washington, where for a while explosions seemed imminent. Continuing his examination of America's national effort to lift race relations to a new stage, he expects soon to look at another "border area," this time farther West, and later at one or more key communities in the Deep South. Mr. Rorty's most recent book, written in collaboration with Moshe Decter, is the best-selling *McCarthy and the Communists*, and his most recent contribution to our pages was "The Native Anti-Semite's 'New Look'" in our November issue. He is a graduate of Tufts College, and holds the Distinguished Service Cross awarded in World War I.

everything they had been taught. They remained unreconciled, angry, convinced that they had been betrayed by vast conspiratorial forces beyond their control. Saber-toothed tigers? So Lester Granger had characterized them in a commencement address at Tuskegee—a not wholly felicitous analogy. Antediluvian and obsolete they might be, but they also seemed more frightened than ferocious; desperate rather than aggressive.

"The newspapers is all liars," declaimed the tall mountain woman in red, glaring at a news photographer who clutched his camera and looked nervously away. "Ain't there nobody gonna give decent white folks a break?"

A dozen militant matrons nodded endorsement. I counted over three hundred of them bunched sparsely in the stands of the little half-mile race track outside Baltimore. Some of them, like the speaker, were obviously recent immigrants from the Deep South; others were apparently recent European immigrants—wives of production-line workers at the nearby Martin bomber plant, or inhabitants of South Baltimore's dirty and dilapidated "pig town." The men—there were fewer of them—stood apart in groups and couples. There were almost no white collar workers, only a few adolescent boys and girls, and of course no Negroes.

There would be no violence. The sheriff

of the township was there with his deputies, and half a dozen recognizable plainclothes policemen lounged in the stands. The segregationists were as segregated by class, and even by a kind of frustrated and confused class-consciousness, as a crowd of striking Southern textile workers called out by professional union organizers.

There, however, the resemblance ended. Everything about this movement looked curiously amateurish, inexperienced, and eccentric. This seemed particularly true of Bryant W. Bowles, ex-Marine drummer, self-styled Florida cracker and president of the National Association for the Advancement of White People, thus far the only movement of any consequence in the border states to be thrown to the surface by the Supreme Court decision outlawing racial segregation in the schools.

Mr. Bowles is thirty-four, of medium height and slightly built, with a ravaged face and troubled eyes. If he has talents either as a rabble-rouser or an organizer, they are not apparent. An hour after the scheduled start of the meeting he emerged from his locked and guarded office and went to the microphone. He was apologetic and defensive. For earlier and much larger meetings, airplanes equipped with loudspeakers had been used to rally the crowds. This time, he explained, they had run out of gas. He begged his followers to stand firm despite this setback, and despite the persecutions to which they were being subjected. He hinted darkly at vast reserves of support on which he would call if needed.

THE constituted authorities had indeed begun to crack down on the NAAWP, and for reasons to which Mr. Bowles's own ineptitude had in some degree contributed. A week before, encouraged by their success in aborting the desegregation of the Milford, Delaware, high school, Bowles's followers had picketed half a dozen Baltimore schools and provided a brief Indian summer holiday for some 2,000 high school and elementary school students.

The police of Baltimore, a Southern city

whose population, if polled, would probably vote against desegregation even today, had at first taken a tolerant attitude; they had permitted picketing of the schools by students and adults, while acting promptly to suppress violence. Then, on Monday, October 4, Bowles made a speech in which he used one of the demagogue's standard gambits, the open-ended negative: Mr. Bowles was not acquainted with Baltimore's police chief; he didn't even know his color.

This probably did not affect the subsequent action of Beverly Ober, member of one of Baltimore's oldest families and a former army colonel, but it certainly didn't help. That evening Colonel Ober went on the air over all Baltimore's radio and television stations. Listening to him, jittery Baltimoreans who had been waiting for the first brick to be thrown, the first blows to be struck, began to relax.

"Last Friday and today," said Colonel Ober, "every member of this department has done his very best to exercise discretion, persuasion, and forbearance. This approach has not met with the success which citizens of Baltimore have a right to expect."

The Commissioner then read sections of a forgotten state law that even the Attorney General hadn't known about until some alert members of the American Veterans Committee dug it up. It specifically prohibited any action tending to disturb any public school in session or to induce children to absent themselves from the schools unlawfully.

"We in Baltimore," concluded Colonel Ober, "have had a long record of orderliness and I do not know that we have, in the history of our city, been faced with a problem such as now exists—but we must face it and the police will do their part. . . . What is going on in Baltimore is not an orderly expression of constitutional rights. . . . If these sections of the code are disregarded, appropriate action will be taken by the police department."

The next morning pickets were promptly dispersed or arrested wherever they appeared. Parents breathed more easily, sent their children back to school, and the action shifted

to the court of Judge James K. Cullen. That afternoon Judge Cullen denied the application of the NAAWP for a ruling to the effect that the Baltimore City School Board had acted illegally by integrating the schools prior to the final decree of the United States Supreme Court.

That ended it: within a few days school attendance in Baltimore returned almost to normal.

BALTIMORE had anticipated the Supreme Court by two years when its School Board ruled in 1952 that the earlier concept of "separate but equal" did not provide genuine educational equality for a dozen qualified Negro boys who had applied for admission to a special accelerated engineering course at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, a white all-male high school. What the Negro boys wanted was the curriculum and the prestige, for which no colored high school in the city provided anything like an equivalent, of the celebrated Baltimore "Poly A" course, whose graduates are accepted as second-year men by many of the nation's best engineering schools. The twelve Negro youths were absorbed without incident, and soon one of them was playing on the football team.

Actually, Baltimore's preparation for integration goes back much further: to an integration of white and Negro teachers in workshop projects and staff conferences that has been in effect for many years; to the inter-racial grouping of the public school Teachers Association, the Teachers Union, and the Principals Association; and to the founding, in 1947, of the Parent-Teachers Association as a mixed-membership organization.

When the Supreme Court decision was announced, the State Board of Education and the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, who are autonomous in most respects, announced conflicting policies. The State Board accepted the advice of Maryland's Attorney General to the effect that the Supreme Court had thus far issued only an "opinion"; hence the state's segregation

laws would remain in effect until final decrees were issued.

That wasn't good enough for Baltimore's able and progressive school commissioners, who, after being told by the City Solicitor that the segregation provided for by the Baltimore City Code was now unconstitutional and invalid, announced on June 3, 1954, that the city's school system would be opened on a non-segregated basis in September.

"Without fear and without subterfuge," said School Superintendent John H. Fischer in a subsequent address to his assembled teachers, "our Board has met its responsibility. Paraphrasing the words of Robert E. Lee, we cannot now do more than our duty, we shall not want to do less."

Hereafter, continued Dr. Fischer, no child would be required to attend any particular school, white or colored. But the program would be voluntary and no large number of pupil transfers was to be expected, since Baltimore had been observing the previous "separate but equal" standard with respect to the construction of schools for Negroes, and with respect to the qualification and payment of teachers. There was every reason to expect integration to work, declared Dr. Fischer, because it had already worked at the staff level, in inter-racial workshops and exchange assembly programs and debates, in Baltimore's adult education program, and at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute.

The Baltimore *Sun* and the Baltimore *Afro-American* joined in editorial applause of Dr. Fischer's address, at the same time that he and his department were being denounced by over a hundred correspondents and angry telephone-callers, some of whom predicted that "blood will run down the stairs in September."

THEY could have been right. Nearly 40 per cent of Baltimore's population is Negro—as large a percentage as in many communities of the Deep South. The traditional pattern of segregation continues unbroken in hotels, restaurants, and places of amusement and recreation. Only this year a proposed

FEPC ordinance was defeated, largely through the opposition of the Jim Crow Railroad Brotherhoods. Without exception, all the white taxi drivers with whom I rode during a three-day stay in Baltimore proved to be voluble white supremacists, while all the Negro taxi drivers kept their mouths shut, even after I had opened mine on the subject of integration.

Two things helped Baltimore to get through the first phase of integration without serious violence. Most important, undoubtedly, was the fact that Baltimore has no school-districting in the ordinary sense; hence, under the announced policy of voluntary integration, any child had the right to enter any school in the city provided that the school of his choice was not already overcrowded. Scarcely less important, however, was the fact that both white and Negro communities were well organized under competent progressive leaders who established an early united front on the segregation issue and maintained it solidly during the crisis of the strike.

WHEN the schools opened in September, the Negroes of Baltimore, as had been predicted, moved cautiously; only 1,376 Negro children, or 2.6 per cent of the total Negro enrollment, chose to enter the formerly all-white schools that were now open to them. As for the whites, no mass migration into the private schools developed and no incidents occurred in the twelve of the twenty formerly white junior and senior high schools that had become integrated. Desegregation of the Catholic school system proceeded simultaneously and also without incident. College-level Catholic schools had been on a non-segregated basis for some years previously. In June, following the announcement of the integration program for the public schools, the Reverend Leo J. McCormick, Superintendent of Schools in the Catholic Department of Education, Archdiocese of Baltimore, had helped to solidify the integration front by declaring forthrightly: "We will certainly abide by the decision of the Supreme Court."

Yet the situation was delicate. When about a hundred white children were assigned to what had been a Negro elementary school, half were kept home by their parents, and the deadlock was broken only after some had been transferred to white schools, regardless of their overcrowded condition. When the strike started on September 30, the disturbance centered at Southern High School, where only 36 Negro students had been enrolled in a student body of 1,780. (In Washington, the Eastern Junior-Senior High School was called upon to absorb 900 Negro students, nearly half the total student body, and did so with little trouble.)

There were many revealing episodes on the picket lines. Obviously, the children were much less race-conscious than their parents—partly because they were on the whole better educated. Many of the adult picketers had had less schooling than the children whom they had encouraged to strike—often against the latter's own judgment and wishes. Some pupils attended their classes in defiance of their parents' injunctions. "Ma says I should go to school with niggers and Pa says I shouldn't," said one ten-year-old to a policeman. "I'll sure have trouble at home for this," said another as she prepared to march through the picket line of her jeering schoolmates.

When a crowd of striking students from Mergenthaler High School descended on Baltimore City College it was noticed that none of the students of the "Poly A" course were among the hundred or so who joined the strikers. At a student assembly held the same morning and unattended by members of the faculty, the president of the Student Council and a member of the football team congratulated their fellow students for keeping their heads, obeying the law, and upholding the high tradition of the school.

But for the intervention of the organized white supremacists, it is unlikely that the students would have struck at all. Teachers and school principals agreed that the parents rather than the children were the problem—and that one generation of desegregation would solve it.

The role of Baltimore's community agencies was important before, during, and after the strike. Protestant pastors and Catholic priests—some of them mobilized by Baltimore's Fellowship House—talked sense on both sides of the color line. Members of the Urban League visited the homes of Negro students who had enrolled in white schools to counsel prudence and non-violence. In general the Negro community maintained admirable discipline, despite a good deal of deliberate provocation; a Negro boy was struck by a white adult, and inflammatory telephone calls to the parents of white children in integrated schools reported falsely that colored people were assembling to attack white people, that schools had been burned down, that a white girl had been stabbed to death by a colored boy. More than once the police intervened just in time to prevent brawls between Negro and white students. Yet during the entire week of the strike only one Negro boy was picked up by the police for carrying a knife.

Probably the most important services rendered by the community agencies were the public backing they gave the school authorities, and the pressure they exerted on the Police Commissioner to stiffen his initial soft policy. Colonel Ober's decision to prohibit all picketing was reached after a conference with Leon Sachs, director of the Baltimore Jewish Council, who had been delegated to speak for an emergency coordinating committee representing a dozen community agencies, including the Urban League, the NAACP, the Catholic Interracial Council, the Council of Churches, the American Veterans Committee, the American Friends Service Committee, the CIO, the AFL, and the Parent-Teachers Association.

WASHINGTON's desegregation troubles began just as Baltimore's ordeal was ending. Warned well in advance of what was coming, the Washington police were out in force on Monday morning, October 4, when students staged demonstrations in front of Anacostia, McKinley, and Eastern high schools. This time comparatively few adults

were in evidence, although the signs were the same as those that had appeared on the Baltimore picket lines: "Niggers Go Back to Africa"; "Wake Up, Mr. Politician"; "Let the People Decide."

From the beginning the police acted resolutely. Would-be picketers were kept off the streets and on the sidewalks; a threatened parade was broken up when police cordoned off Anacostia Bridge. At the peak of the demonstration only three of the eleven senior high schools were affected, along with six of the junior high schools; the total of absentees never exceeded 3,000. As in Baltimore, the strike was broken by the coordinated action of the police and the school authorities. On Wednesday, October 7, Superintendent Hobart M. Corning issued a statement ordering all students back to their classes on pain of forfeiting all school honors, including participation in inter-school athletics and school publications, and eligibility for cadet corps commissions. Absentee students under fifteen, continued the statement, would be reported to the truant officers; those of sixteen would be dropped from the rolls. The next morning school attendance recovered impressively and was soon back to normal.

Although the National Association for the Advancement of White People has its national headquarters in Washington, there was little evidence of NAAWP leadership in the strike. President Bowles himself appeared only once. At an abortive outdoor meeting in Anacostia, he declared that his purpose was to keep the students off the streets.

"We will be their spokesmen after the streets are cleared," he declared. "It's their business if they want to stay away from school. They are still free Americans."

Later, when Bowles appeared at the Anacostia school with the avowed purpose of "counseling with the striking students," police ordered him to leave.

WASHINGTON, like Baltimore, is a Southern city with a large Negro population and an inherited tradition of segregation in race relations. Otherwise the two places are

markedly different, especially with respect to housing, with which educational integration is indissolubly linked—in the North as well as the South. As Arthur Levitt, president of the New York Board of Education, has pointed out, "Before we can have an integrated school system we must have integrated housing." Baltimore's Negroes live in traditionally all-black areas, and the pattern of segregation in housing was confirmed by the earlier policies of the Baltimore Housing Authority in its low-rent public housing projects. Not until last June, as part of the adjustment initiated by the Supreme Court decision, did the chairman of the Housing Authority announce that steps would be taken to "eliminate the factor of race in the selection of eligible tenants." Hence, with few fringe areas of mixed white and Negro population and no compulsory districting of the school population, Baltimore's policy of voluntary integration was both natural and feasible.

Washington faced a much more dynamic and complex situation. During the postwar decade, Negroes have poured into Washington. Block by block and area by area, they took over the houses left vacant by the thousands of white families who during this period moved out to Maryland and Virginia suburbs. There resulted a shift in the balance of population (now 40 per cent Negro, with the balance approximately reversed in the school enrollment, where Negro children now outnumber whites), a multiplication of racial fringe areas with their accompanying social tensions, and an accelerating obsolescence of uneconomic, half-used segregated school facilities. Hence, long before the Supreme Court decision, Washington had been obliged to face the issue of desegregation, not only in education, but on other fronts of inter-racial contact.

A DECADE ago, Washington was almost as tightly segregated as any city of the Deep South; only public transportation and public buildings were free of racial discrimination. The reports of the President's Committee on Civil Rights in 1947, and of the

National Committee on Segregation in the Nation's Capital in 1946, described this pattern and challenged it. Gradually at first, the rigid mold of segregation was cracked, then swiftly broken by a series of decisive actions in which the courts, the churches, civic groups, and the executive and legislative branches of the federal government all played important roles.

In 1949 the Recreation Board of the District of Columbia announced a policy of gradual desegregation of playgrounds, swimming pools, and other recreational facilities. Significantly, the only violence during the implementation of this policy occurred at the swimming pool in Anacostia, subsequent scene of the disturbances during the school strike. The policies of gradualism versus all-out conversion received a comparison test when the Department of the Interior, which controlled 19 of the 140 recreation areas in the city, in a contract with the District Board stipulated that Interior's facilities must be opened quickly and without preliminaries to inter-racial use. Nothing happened, despite the predictions of alarmed opposition groups; whereas the step-by-step procedure of the District Board, under which playgrounds were at first designated "for white children," "for Negro children," and "open," had the effect of rallying antagonists and touching off a new round of public controversy every time a shift was made.

In 1951, following the Supreme Court decision in the Thompson case, the District Commissioners announced on a Monday that the law obliging all restaurants to serve Negroes would be enforced beginning the following Wednesday. All restaurants complied, and there were no incidents; the public accepted a decision for which it had been fully prepared.

In March 1953, the National Capital Housing Authority established a policy of desegregation to be applied to all projects, subject only to the limitations of the existing dual school system which made educational facilities unavailable to both races in some areas. Within a year, 93 per cent of the housing units were integrated. Once

more Washington had been presented with a *fait accompli* which provoked no public argument and no incidents; not a single family withdrew as a result of the integration policy.

Similarly, there was no gradualism about the integration of places of public entertainment. All the public discussion and all the incidents, such as the exclusion of Marian Anderson from Constitution Hall, and the refusal of a white high school to permit an inter-racial cast to present scenes from the patriotic pageant, "Faith of Our Fathers," took place *before* the emerging policy of integration had reached the stage of general practice in the nation's capital. Today, Washington's concert halls, theaters, and movies all admit Negroes—and there are no incidents.

Thus, on the evidence to date, one must conclude that in every field, desegregation in areas like Baltimore and Washington is best accomplished by concentrating and shortening the period of preliminary public discussion, and then announcing and unhesitatingly enforcing clear and uncompromising policies.

CONSIDERABLE credit for pioneering the desegregation of Washington's schools must be given to the Catholic church, and specifically to Patrick A. O'Boyle, archbishop of Washington. In 1948, when Archbishop O'Boyle came to Washington, after distinguished service as director of the Catholic Charities of New York and Catholic Overseas Relief, his parishioners presented him with a fund of \$50,000 for the construction of a suitable official residence. Today, the archbishop still occupies his modest apartment in St. Patrick's rectory in downtown Washington; the \$50,000, plus \$25,000 of Monsignor O'Boyle's own money, went into the purchase of a property at Howard and First Streets for the use of Catholic students at Howard University.

One of the archbishop's first acts after assuming office was to preach a sermon on the 1900-year anti-racist tradition of the Catholic church and what he thought it implied with

respect to the relations of the white and Negro members of the archdiocese. The archbishop's instructions to his aids and associates are reported to have been brief: "Get it done and keep your mouths shut." Thereafter the work of racial integration went forward without publicity but with such speed that today Catholic education in Washington is completely integrated at all levels. The same policy and the same energetic leadership has made integration all but complete in Catholic hospitals, institutions, homes, and lay organizations in the capital.

REPRESENTATIVES of other religious groups, including the Washington Federation of Churches and the Jewish Community Council, played important roles in preparing public opinion for desegregation. The American Friends Service Committee employed a full-time office staff on its Washington community-relations program, which featured a series of desegregation seminars for teachers conducted during the spring and summer of this year. During the strike the Federation of Churches issued a statement supporting the action of the school authorities; responding to an appeal from the Urban League, the Federation also mobilized a number of pastors who visited the picket lines and the homes of strikers.

The principal opposition to desegregation came from the District Federation of Citizens Groups, representing 57 groups limited to white members. In August the Federation held a mass meeting at which it was alleged that "subversive organizations" had had a part in hastening the District Board of Education's decision to desegregate. The week before school opened, District Court Judge Schweinhaut denied the Federation's petition for an injunction restraining the school authorities from "taking any further steps" toward school integration.

The Board of Education had at first wanted to wait for the finalization of the Supreme Court's decree. Then, on the advice of the District Corporation Counsel, they decided to go ahead with a step-by-step program which Mrs. Margaret Just Butcher, one of

the three Negro members of the Board, objected to as too gradual. Finally, emboldened by the apparent success with which the schools had digested the first big installment of integration in September, Commissioner Hobart M. Corning decided to take the more or less calculated risk of transferring additional contingents of Negro students to what had been all-white high schools, several of which were badly overcrowded already. Some of the school people believe that this was what touched off the October strike; this and the gradual fading of the September honeymoon of integration, during which both white and Negro students were on their best behavior.

It is noteworthy that the worst and most persistent trouble developed at the Anacostia High School, although it received only a half dozen Negro students when school opened, and three weeks later a second contingent of 40, making less than 50 in an enrollment of 1,300. Anacostia is located in a low-income fringe area where conflict over housing and recreation had already engendered racial tension. In addition, the assistant principal at Anacostia—the principal had resigned and there were rumors that he was to be replaced by a Negro—lacked authority when faced by the crisis of the strike.

Eastern is a junior-senior high school, located in an area of southeast Washington that had been steadily emptied by the exodus of its middle-class white population—mostly government workers—to the suburbs. In September, Eastern opened its doors to 900 Negro students, added to a white enrollment of 1,100. No other Washington high school was asked to swallow so large a dose of integration at one gulp. Yet only 200 Eastern students struck, and then only briefly.

Partly because of its traditions—Eastern High School has many distinguished alumni in government service—and partly because of the popularity of its principal, a veteran of both world wars, Eastern was able to weather the strike and overcome the souring of initially good relations that had prevailed between white and Negro students in the first month of the school year. However, Eastern

has suffered in the process, since for a while at least the energies of its excellent white and Negro staff must be divided between education and integration. Moreover, the Negro students are not as well prepared; the “equal but separate” all-Negro schools from which they came could not, in point of fact, adhere to equally high standards of instruction.

MCKINLEY HIGH SCHOOL also came through the strike with flying colors. It is a technical high school of high standing, but was left half empty when Negroes moved into the row-houses formerly occupied by lower-middle-class whites who had migrated to the suburbs. When the Supreme Court decision was announced, McKinley had an enrollment of less than half its capacity of 1,700. At the beginning of the fall term it received a contingent of some 400 Negro students, about half of them transferred from Armstrong High School, an all-Negro vocational school, the others from scattered junior high schools. McKinley's principal, Dr. Charles Bish, believes that the change-over might have been accomplished without open conflict if there had been some screening of the incoming students, and if he'd had time to talk to the white and Negro groups separately. Even as it was, only 200 McKinley students joined the strikers.

Some of the incidents reflected an adolescent intensity of school spirit rather than racial tension. Bursting with ardor for her former alma mater, a Negro girl in a cheer leader's dress attempted to give the Armstrong yell. Nobody told her not to, or explained that the loyal McKinley students would have booed her almost as loudly if she had been white and had given a cheer for a “white” high school.

But school spirit was also invoked effectively to break the strike, both by the principal and by his football coach, who had fortunately had some previous experience with integrated schools in New Jersey. A student assembly was called and a bi-racial committee appointed to hear complaints and suggestions. In his address to the students,

Dr. Bish appealed eloquently for bi-racial loyalty to "Tech tradition," predicted victory in the coming football game with Roosevelt High School, and then marched the students out of the hall singing "On, McKinley." Two days later, fate collaborated with the Supreme Court as pliantly as in a Hollywood script: a Negro player on the McKinley team intercepted a forward pass. McKinley won, and cheering students carried the Negro from the field in a glorious technicolor finish.

SUCH were the birth pangs of integration in Baltimore and Washington. In both cities the strikes left wounds that complicated the subsequent growing pains of inter-racial understanding and adjustment, and imposed heavy burdens on principals and teachers. There have been many small incidents, some requiring expulsion, but none needing the intervention of police. You see the two races still keeping to themselves in the cafeterias and in the corridors. Toleration has been achieved, but only here and there has mutual liking had time to develop. Integration isn't accomplished overnight by judicial fiat.

Where the birth pangs of integration were slight, as they tended to be in schools that received only small quotas of Negro students—and no unexpected second round of fresh Negro enrollees, as at Anacostia and elsewhere—the subsequent growing pains of integration were correspondingly mild. But does this mean that the gradual approach to integration is the right one?

It depends on what you mean by gradual. Segregationists tend to use the word as a synonym for obstruction and sabotage. The practicable pace of integration is determined largely by the circumstances of the particular school and housing situation involved. It was faster in Washington than in Baltimore because of necessity: in the capital, population shifts had caused severe overcrowding of many Negro schools and progressive disuse of white schools to the point where it became necessary to transfer them from white to Negro use. Invariably this would release a spate of public controversy. Negro schools

had insufficient funds for teachers while white schools had excess teachers with tenure. Makeshift attempts to solve these problems resulted in an occasional dismissal of a white temporary teacher and a decline of teaching morale.

Whenever that point is reached, as it was in Washington, rumors spread that integration of the schools is imminent, and at that point the only practicable solution is not gradualism, but a radical change-over, adequately prepared and announced, but resolutely executed.

Desegregation is a self-liquidating problem. The more it is debated, the more conflict. The more—and the more quickly and decisively—it is practiced, the more quickly and effectively public attention is diverted from race. Educational integration provides the indispensable means of breaking the inherited chains of prejudice, and it is practice, not preaching, that does it.

The strains, the conflicts, the inhumanity, the social and economic waste of segregation are intolerable, whereas the strains and pains of integration are not. Baltimore and Washington proved it—especially the capital. Obeying the President's injunction to provide a model for the country, Washington, after some backing and filling, took much of its integration practically neat. True, it shuddered slightly, but it survived, and today Washington and the nation are the better for it.

BECAUSE its population is disfranchised, Washington has no local politics. Maryland and Delaware have, and the responses of their officials to the challenge of the Supreme Court decision afford some clue to what is likely to happen elsewhere, as the tide of integration moves across the nation along Mason and Dixon's line, with bulges and enclaves in the Deep South and with attention attracted increasingly to the "naturally" segregated Negro ghettos of our Northern industrial cities.

The setback given to integration in Milford, Delaware, was largely attributable to the failure of Governor J. Caleb Boggs to

resist the pressure exerted upon him by the segregationists. In rural Delaware the opponents of integration include prosperous white farmers whose ideas are as Southern as the architecture of their manor houses, inherited from the 18th-century plantation economy. Bowles's movement in the Milford area derives much of its strength and prestige from this source.

When representatives of the NAACP sought a conference with the Governor they were confronted without warning by members of NAAWP whom the Governor had invited to the meeting, and whose implicit threats of violence bolstered his request that the NAACP consent "voluntarily" to the withdrawal of the ten Negro youths from the Milford high school. It was also reported that after the Milford Board of Education had resigned in protest, the membership of the new board, which subsequently capitulated to the segregationists, was determined after consultation with Bowles and his associates.

In Maryland, integration was stalled, outside Baltimore, by Attorney General Edward D. E. Rollins's ruling that the state law requiring segregation must remain in effect until the Supreme Court has finalized its decree. In Maryland's southern counties, as in southern Delaware, the percentage of Negroes is high and the pattern of race relationships is strictly Southern. In Anne Arundel County, a meeting called by the Maryland Petition Committee, an affiliate of the NAAWP, passed resolutions demanding that nothing be done to implement the Supreme Court decision until the question had been submitted to a state referendum. Governor McKeldin may not be particularly responsive to these pressures, however, since he was reelected despite the attempt of his opponent "Curly" Byrd to woo the segregationists by declaring that desegregation was a "local issue."

SINCE the effect of the Supreme Court decision is virtually to outlaw the segregationists, they must turn, in default of more respectable leadership, at least in the border

states, to the fanatics, crackpots, and racketeers of the racist and ultra-nationalist fringe, who, like Bowles, are rarely more than a jump or two ahead of the sheriff and the district attorney.* In addition to his Washington headquarters, Bowles claims to have branches in Richmond, Atlanta, and Baltimore. A generous estimate would put the present membership of the NAAWP at 50,000. Without press or radio support except from an occasional country weekly or local radio station, he is dependent upon his own monthly publication, the *National Forum*, a primitively edited and printed four-page folder which reveals Bowles's affinity for and probable alliances with most of the veteran anti-Negro and anti-Semitic hate-mongers of America, including John Beaty, Joe Kamp, and especially the West Coast bigot Frank L. Britton. Most of the copy in the first issue of the NAAWP's *National Forum* was lifted bodily, illustrations and all, from Britton's virulent *American Nationalist*, and its second issue borrowed heavily from Conde McGinley's equally vicious *Common Sense*.†

*In several of his speeches, Bowles has referred darkly to the "reserves of strength" upon which the NAAWP can draw if need be, thereby, and perhaps intentionally, leading his hearers to suspect that he might have Ku Klux Klan support. Not only is there no evidence of such support; quite possibly, if it were forthcoming, it would do the NAAWP more harm than good. Undoubtedly it did the NAAWP no good when Willis McCall, Sheriff of Lake County, Florida, and the slayer of Samuel Shepherd, arrived in Milford offering it his services. There is said to be a "Buck for Bowles" movement organized by North Carolina white supremacists, but it is improbable that Bowles has obtained any substantial support from sympathizers in the Deep South, if only because they are too busy building their own barricades against integration to have either the time or money to spare for the "border" regions.

†Repeatedly, Bowles and his collaborators refer to the "Jew-led NAACP," and such references usually get applause. In St. Louis John W. Hamilton, once a cell leader of the Young Communist League, and later one of Gerald L. K. Smith's helpers, has organized the National Citizens' Protective Association in an attempt to exploit the desegregation issue. In fact, by this time most of the ultra-nationalist and anti-Semitic fringe groups have added opposition to integration to their party line, as expressed in recent is-

Bowles's own demagoguery is at once less inflammatory, more pretentious, and less literate, as may be judged from the following passage taken from the "Statement of Aims and Principles" he wrote for the NAAWP:

"History discloses that Man's 'Will to exist' has resulted in a highly competitive struggle among the various races for sustenance, land, wealth, freedom, etc., which we understand as the 'struggle for existence.' In this struggle for existence every race develops a way of life, or *Culture*. . . . It is to this noble task of advancing and strengthening our *Culture* that the NAAWP is dedicated."

The "culture" of Bowles's followers is of course that of the illiterate or semi-literate poor white farmers of the earlier agrarian South. It was they who provided the masked riders of the Reconstruction Period; who burned the fiery crosses of subsequent Ku Klux Klan revivals; whose descendants, along with the Negroes, migrated to Chicago and Detroit and there touched off the race riots that followed both world wars. At a steadily accelerating rate, during the past three decades, industrialization and emigration have dispersed that culture, and education has enlightened it, while the progressive eco-

sues of the "hate" press. In the July 1954 issue of Conde McGinley's *Common Sense*, an article by the veteran anti-Semitic propagandist Eustace Mullins was headlined: COMMUNISM HITS SOUTH WITH NON-SEGREGATION. . . . JEWISH MARXISTS THREATEN NEGRO REVOLT IN AMERICA. . . . COMMUNISTS PLAN BLACK REPUBLIC IN SOUTH.

nomic and political emancipation of the Negroes has challenged its pretensions.

Is there enough left of that culture to provide the mass base of an anti-desegregation movement in the border states? Will the neo-Nazi anti-Semites, the Stone Age fundamentalist exhorters, the ultra-nationalist fanatics, crackpots, and racketeers, find in the fight against desegregation the unifying issue that will make them for the first time a serious political force?

From what happened, and especially from what didn't happen, in Delaware, in Baltimore, and in Washington, one is inclined to doubt it strongly. Nothing succeeds like success, and now desegregation can begin to feed on its successes, as did the FEPC. Not only did Baltimore and Washington prove groundless the dire predictions of the segregationists; even more important, they provided major laboratories in which the problems of integration will be studied and solved with all the resources available to highly developed and well-staffed school systems. The Deep South, of course, is another matter, but even there the resistance to integration may prove to be less unified and less absolute than is generally anticipated.

However fast the Supreme Court moves to make final its desegregation decree, it can scarcely be announced sooner than next spring. Meanwhile, desegregation will go forward, gradually or rapidly, depending upon the nature of the social and political terrain; on the whole, the faster it goes, the better.